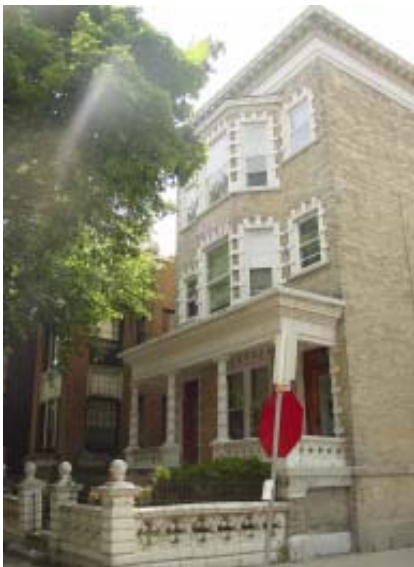


# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## Terra Cotta Row District

**1048, 1054, 1057, and 1059 W. Oakdale Ave.**

**Terra cotta wall - 1040-1042, 1048, and 1059 W. Oakdale Ave.**

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**Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by  
the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, September 2, 2004**



**CITY OF CHICAGO  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development  
Denise M. Casalino, P.E., Commissioner**

**Cover: Photographs of buildings in the Terra Cotta Row District, including (clockwise from top left) 1048 W. Oakdale; 1057 W. Oakdale; 1058 W. Oakdale; wall in front of 1040-48 W. Oakdale; 1059 W. Oakdale; and (center) 1048 W. Oakdale.**

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.*

*The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

# **TERRA COTTA ROW DISTRICT**

**1048, 1054, 1057, AND 1059 W. OAKDALE AVE.**

**TERRA COTTA WALL - 1040-1042, 1048, AND 1059 W. OAKDALE AVE.**

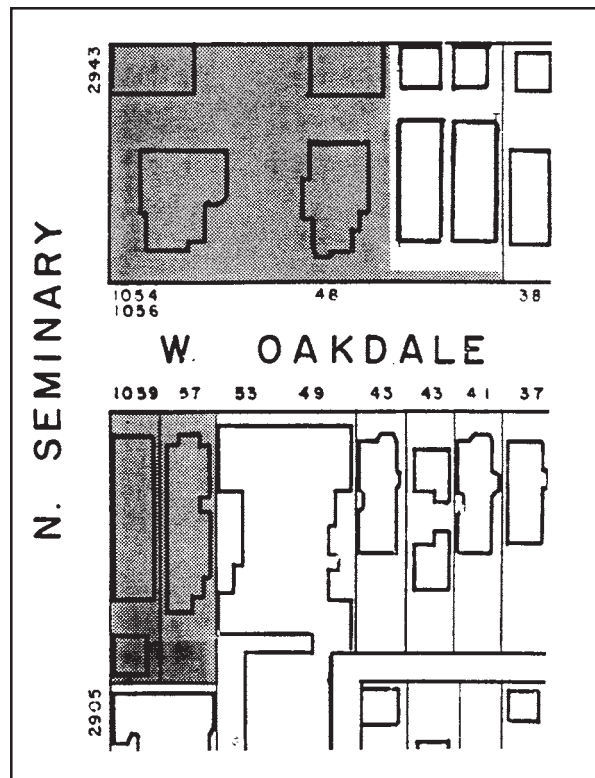
**BUILT: 1887 - 1901**

**ARCHITECTS: VARIOUS**

This group of four residential buildings and an unusual terra cotta wall in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood is noteworthy for its historic connections to the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company and its shared use of ornate terra cotta decoration. This combination of architectural distinction and historic interest sets them apart from other buildings in the neighborhood.

The buildings' terra cotta decoration is unusual for Chicago residential buildings of this scale and location in a neighborhood of working-class origins. Such ornament is more commonly found on grander historic mansions on the lakefront or the Gold Coast, or on buildings of greater scale such as large apartment or commercial buildings. The buildings of the Terra Cotta Row District, however, were built by two of the founders of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, one of the leading manufacturers of a material that revolutionized modern architecture and is uniquely significant to Chicago. The term "terra cotta row" refers to the concentration of dwellings built by executives of the company, as well as the elaborate terra cotta detailing of the buildings and an unusual terra cotta wall.

The dwellings—two single-family houses and two flat buildings—are distinctive because of their architectural treatments. Individually they illustrate various styles, but three of them are unified by their strong references to German and Austrian architecture. Two of the original owners were intimately familiar with the styles, having emigrated from Germany and Austria in the 1860s. The Germanic qualities of the structures highlight the ethnic heritage of not only their owners but of Lakeview itself, which was a stronghold of Chicago's German-American population.



Top: A map of the Terra Cotta Row District, located in the Lakeview community area.  
 Bottom: A view of 1057 and 1059 W. Oakdale Ave.

## HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

The two houses and one of the flat buildings were built by Gustav Hottinger and Henry Rohkam, president and vice-president, respectively, of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company. In early 1886, Hottinger and Rohkam purchased five lots on Oakdale Avenue, with the intention of constructing new homes. To this point, both men had lived in a series of modest frame houses on the city's North Side.

Hottinger purchased two-and-a-half lots at the northeast corner of Oakdale and Seminary Avenues, and constructed his house (1054 W. Oakdale Ave.) the same year, while Rohkam bought the two-and-a-half lots immediately east and built at 1048 Oakdale in 1887.

In addition to Rohkam and Hottinger's houses, a third large house was built in the block for another Northwestern executive, Fritz Wagner. Wagner, who was general manager from 1881 through 1915, built his residence at 1049 Oakdale in 1887. The house was demolished in 1927 for the construction of an apartment building currently standing.

These brick and terra cotta houses of Northwestern's officers were much larger and more eye-catching than any of the other residences in the area. For example, an 1887 fire insurance atlas, which identified existing structures, shows seven frame houses on the north side of the street and none on the south.

In 1899, Hottinger bought an additional two lots on the southeast corner of the intersection. In 1901, he built the three-flat at 1059 Oakdale; fifteen years later, his son, Arnold, built the two-flat at 1057 Oakdale for his home.

### ***Henry Rohkam House***

***1048 W. Oakdale Ave.***

***Date: 1887***

***Architect: Theodore Karls***

The picturesque character of this buff-colored brick and terra cotta house makes it one of the more unique houses in the city and the most prominent in the district. Its distinctive, gabled and richly decorated facades, recalling the high-style residences of merchants in Germany, are unusual in Chicago. This Teutonic appearance was not happenstance, as it referred to the architecture with which Henry Rohkam (c.1850 - 1896), a first generation German-American, was familiar.

The quaint composition of the house adapts distinctive elements of Flemish Renaissance Revival style architecture. It is two stories tall on a raised basement, and has an overall cruciform plan, with bays on the east and west elevations forming the short arms of the cross.





Top and bottom: The stepped gables and lavish terra cotta ornamentation of the Henry Rohkam House, the most elaborate building in the Terra Cotta Row District. The house is designed in the Flemish Renaissance Revival style, an architectural style unusual for Chicago.

The most prominent architectural features are the stepped gables, highlighted by brick corbelling, on the south (front) and west facades. The gables, as well as the profuse ornament, reflect the influence of traditional German residential architecture. Monumental gables were a distinctive element of merchants' houses from the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Facades were enlivened with bands of contrasting brick and copious ornamental details. An elaborate stair and porch reflecting the influence of the Eastlake style provides entry to the house. The porch and stairs are a recent reconstruction based on a historic photograph.

The Germanic character of the design of the house is not surprising, given the background of Rohkam's architect, Theodore Karls (1833 - 1895). He was born in Berlin and graduated from the Berlin School of Architecture in 1852. He worked in the office of the architect for King William Frederick IV, and later opened his own office in Berlin. Karls came to Chicago in 1868, where he was employed by William Boyington, who designed the Chicago Water Tower (1867). He later opened his own office. As a member of the Germania Club and other fraternal organizations, he was active in Chicago's German-American community.

Architectural embellishments for Rohkam's house were readily available because of his position with the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company. From its exotic wall to the intricately detailed chimney pots, the Rohkam House is a veritable showcase of terra cotta ornament. There are a variety of details, such as: the coping atop the gable "steps;" the allegorical-figured panel in the center window under the front gable; spandrels underneath the first-floor windows on the front; and the decorative trim on the brick piers flanking the front gable. Terra cotta is also used for more functional elements such as the string courses and window hoods.

The large figurative panel on the west facade, showing a woman seated at a spinning wheel, is particularly noteworthy. It is not known whether the figure was based on someone in the family, though the uniqueness of the subject matter suggests it was. Ornamental motifs in terra cotta were usually abstract in character, and based on floral motifs.

The rich Baroque decoration of the house carries over to the ornate wall in front of the property. Virtually all of the surviving historic fences in Chicago are of iron. This wall was distinct for its material and design when it was built; it is that much rarer today. The wall, and a large urn in the side yard, are representative of the garden wares that the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company produced. The wall and urn, together with a wall across the street (1059 W. Oakdale Ave.), are the only known extant samples of this aspect of Northwestern's work.

The wall—including its piers, rails, and newel posts—are made of red terra cotta. It is relatively low and open, the openings formed by a Gothic quatrefoil design. An early photograph of the house indicates the wall was not original to the property; however, it was in place by 1899 when it was illustrated in an architectural journal. The wall





Details from the Rohkam House include its elaborate corbelled stepped gables (top) and a large terra cotta figurative panel depicting a woman seated at a spinning wheel (bottom).





Top: A richly detailed terra cotta panel beneath one of the Rohkam House's windows.  
Bottom: The house's fanciful Eastlake style stair and porch, recently reconstructed from a historic photograph.

originally fronted both Rohkam House and surrounded two sides of the neighboring corner residence of Gustav Hottinger (1054 W. Oakdale Ave.). Today only the terra cotta base of the wall, topped by a modern chain link fence, continues around the Hottinger House.

The buff-colored terra cotta urn located in the east side yard of the Rohkam House is classical in design, depicting ancient warriors in combat. It is approximately six feet tall and sits on a foliate-design base. The sculptural detailing of the fence and urn complements the lavishness of the architecture, and contributes significantly to the character of this city block.

There have been no significant changes to the house. A pressed brick and terra cotta coachhouse, designed by Theodore Andresen and built in 1912, replaced an earlier wood stable. The masonry character of the coachhouse is consistent with the house.

During the 1880s, Henry Rohkam bought three additional lots east of his initial holding, and maintained them as part of the yard around the house. The lots remained undeveloped until the late 1980s when two houses were built. These houses, of red brick and smaller in scale than the Rohkam House, do not affect the historic character of the block. The terra cotta wall continues across the fronts of the newer houses.

### ***Gustav Hottinger House***

***1054 W. Oakdale Ave.***

***Date: 1886***

***Architect: Julius Huber***

As one of the founders of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company and its long-time president, Gustav Hottinger (1848-1929) was one of the most influential people in the manufacturing and marketing of terra cotta, not only in Chicago but nationally. He was born in Vienna, Austria, where he studied sculpting, and came to Chicago in 1869. Hottinger worked for the Chicago Terra Cotta Company from 1871 until he joined with others in founding Northwestern Terra Cotta in 1877.

The Hottinger House is altered from its original appearance. Nevertheless, its scale and materials, as well as its strong historic associations with Gustav Hottinger and the three other terra cotta clad dwellings, calls for its inclusion within the district.

The picturesque quality of the Hottinger House's original appearance made it comparable to the neighboring Rohkam dwelling. Interestingly, though, Hottinger's house does not directly refer to European architecture, as do the other three houses in the district. Instead, it employs an American Queen Anne design.

Typical of the style, Hottinger's house combines materials—in this case, buff-colored brick and terra cotta with wood—in an asymmetrical composition. The series of wood elements—bays on the south (front) and east elevations, a second-story front porch, and





**Top and bottom: The Gustav Hottinger House, by its large scale and Queen Anne styling, visually anchors the Terra Cotta Row District, despite changes in its original appearance.**



the gables—complements the smooth masonry wall surfaces. The variety of intersecting gable-end pitched roofs also contributes to the informal configuration. The house is two-and-a-half stories tall on a raised basement, the floor levels defined by continuous, terra cotta string courses, or moldings.

Surprising for a house built by the president of a terra cotta company, the Hottinger Residence is very restrained in its use of terra cotta. Terra cotta panels near the entrance show signs that they originally incorporated the owner's initials, but these apparently were scraped off by later owners. A terra cotta wall was built, probably during the 1890s, at the sidewalk line; its foundation is still visible. Although this wall was later removed, it was identical to the one still standing next door, in front of the Rohkam House.

Julius Huber (1852 - 1939), Hottinger's architect, was born in New Jersey, but studied in Munich, Germany. After graduating, he came to Chicago and worked in his father's architecture practice from 1873 to 1881, when he established his own office. In addition to the many houses he designed for German-Americans, Huber was the architect for Brand Hall (Clark and Erie Streets, demolished), a popular German-American meeting and entertainment hall.

The house has been remodeled over the years, but its basic elements remain intact. There is a large frame addition to the rear, at the northeast corner, but its location and non-descript character minimize its impact. Above the front entrance is what was probably an open-air, second-story porch. This porch is now enclosed. (The first-floor porch and entrance also appear to have been altered; the front stairs, which were wood originally, are now concrete; and the column and wing wall may be changed from the original. Though the materials are different, the present configuration of the stairs is probably consistent with the original.)

The gables on the front and east side originally had small windows in them; these were covered with aluminum siding during the late 1980s. Typically, all of the original wood surfaces would have most likely been finished with shingles laid in decorative designs, such as saw-tooth or fish-scale patterns. In their original configuration, all of these features would have given the house a more delicate character.

There is also a masonry coachhouse, which seems to have been designed and built at the same time as the Rohkam's (1912). It was remodeled during the 1980s with Post-modern details.



**Top: A unique feature of the the Terra Cotta Row District is its unusual terra cotta wall. The wall is representative of the garden wares that the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company produced and may be one of the last surviving examples of such a wall in the City. Bottom: A detail of the wall showing its Gothic quatrefoil openings.**

***Gustav Hottinger Three-Flat***

***1059 W. Oakdale Ave.***

***Date: 1901***

***Architect: Theodore Andresen***

In 1901, Hottinger commissioned another building, a three-flat, for the southeast corner, directly across the street from his residence. Despite the presence of Hottinger and Rohkam's ostentatious houses, the remainder of the block was built up with more modestly sized houses and flats. Hottinger's decision to build a flat building, apparently as income property, was in keeping with the character of the block as it had evolved since the mid-1880s.

Like the earlier houses, the Hottinger flat-building is animated by its terra cotta detailing. Though its overall configuration is straightforward—a three-story, pressed-brick structure on a raised basement—its ornamental treatment is lavish. The building is designed in the Classical Revival style and employs various classical components, executed in a soft-white terra cotta: fluted columns with foliate banding and four-sided Ionic capitals; “Gibbs surrounds” (window and door jambs bordered by protruding blocks of masonry); and a tall entablature (an elaborate beam, divided into a series of horizontal bands) and wide cornice. At the rear, southwest corner of each floor is what appears to be a sun-porch; the facade is an engaging composition of arched windows filled with glass and terra cotta. The concentration of this detail anchors the building and makes an appropriate visual terminus to the block.

The design of the building is particularly well-done in its handling of the entry from the street. A terra cotta trimmed porch stretches across the front of the building. There is a small front yard, bordered by a low terra cotta wall (matching the design of the Rohkam House), between the street and building. The short distance between the street and the building, together with the similar scale of the front porch and the wall, link them visually; the ensemble looks like a gazebo or some type of garden structure.

The excessive amount of classical ornament gives this three-flat building its beguiling quality. The composition was inspired by the nineteenth-century German Neo-classical movement in architecture, which was brought about by the work of the influential architect, Karl Frederick Schinkel.

There is little information about building's architect, Theodore Andresen. In addition to his work on this building and on the coachhouses for Hottinger and Rohkam, Andresen was the architect for two of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company's buildings: a one-story boiler house and a four-story powerhouse (1906). Andresen's office was on Belmont Avenue, in Lakeview.





Top left and right: Rich terra cotta ornamentation executed in the Classical Revival style details Gustav Hottinger Three-Flat. Bottom: The terra cotta full-story porch and front wall are distinctive features of the building.

***Arnold Hottinger House***

***1057 W. Oakdale Ave.***

***Date: 1916***

***Architect: Moriz F. Strauch***

The last of the four residences in the Terra Cotta Row District is a two-flat at 1057 W. Oakdale Ave., which was apparently built by one of Gustav Hottinger's sons, Arnold. The elder Hottinger had bought this parcel and the one at 1059 in 1899, but building permit records identify the son as the owner. Directories show that Arnold Hottinger lived in one of the apartments until the late 1920s.

The architecture is Viennese Modern in character; that is, monumental in overall form, but with austere, rectilinear details. References to contemporary European architecture were rare in Chicago, partially because of the popularity of the Prairie School and also because of architects' unfamiliarity with work outside of this country. The Hottinger two-flat is a very good illustration of modern European architecture.

In comparison with the other terra cotta homes, this design is understated. However, compared with contemporary two-flats, the amount of decorative terra cotta is impressive. The two-flat sits on a standard 25-foot-wide lot and fills most of it, so that only its front facade is visible from the street. It is two stories tall and of brown, textured brick with terra cotta trim. The street facade is rectilinear in form, and has a centered two-story bay. The front facade has a peaked roofline. The entrance is on the west side of the structure, under a brick and clay-tile roof canopy structure.

The decorative panels are of white, enamel-glazed, terra cotta. The ornamental pieces include grill-work just above the foundation, a large spandrel between the first and second floors, mullions between the windows, an elaborate projecting cornice, and two urns above the cornice.

The building's design is particularly distinctive because of its use of tinted terra cotta. The cornice and the ornamental band underneath the first-floor windows are high-lighted with light green shading in the recessed areas. Its use of this design is fitting since the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company was one of the innovators of polychrome terra cotta. The building's architect, Moriz F. Strauch (1876 - 1946), emigrated from Vienna in 1905. Prior to receiving his architectural license in 1911, Strauch was employed as an architect by Northwestern Terra Cotta to make shop drawings for terra cotta installations and to assist outside architects in incorporating terra cotta into their building designs. He was working for the company when he designed the Hottinger two-flat. He was also the architect for a commercial building (1917) commissioned by Sherman Taylor at 744-48 W. Fullerton Ave. (Taylor was Henry Rohkam's son-in-law and a vice-president of Northwestern Terra Cotta).



**Top: The Arnold Hottinger House displays a high quality and quantity of terra cotta ornamentation for an otherwise typical two-flat building. Bottom: The austere, rectilinear ornamentation found in the building's spandrel suggests the Viennese Modern style, which is unusual in Chicago.**



## ARCHITECTURAL STYLES OF THE TERRA COTTA ROW DISTRICT

The buildings located in the Terra Cotta Row District display several important late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles. Common to many Chicago neighborhoods are the district's Queen Anne and Classical Revival-style buildings, while the district's Flemish Renaissance Revival and the Viennese Modern-style buildings are unusual designs for Chicago.

### ***Flemish Renaissance Revival***

Originating in Italy in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, the cultural movement known as the Renaissance was expressed in architecture in a new emphasis on rational clarity and regularity of parts and in a conscious revival of Roman architectural practice in structure. As the Renaissance spirit was imported into other Western European countries, Renaissance architecture was compromised with local building traditions. Based on the architecture of the cities in Flanders (now Belgium), Flemish Renaissance Revival architecture is characterized by heavy masonry buildings with stepped gables and elaborate ornamentation. The distinctive stepped gable, corbeled brickwork and lavish ornament of the Henry Rohkam House (1048 W. Oakdale Ave.) are typical of the Flemish Renaissance Revival style.

### ***Queen Anne***

The eclectic Queen Anne style was popular in Chicago during the 1880s and 1890s. The name was coined in England to describe asymmetrical buildings that combined medieval and classical forms and ornament. In America, the Queen Anne style was originally used for suburban houses and seaside resort cottages, but quickly became popular for urban residences and commercial buildings. Details typical of the style include asymmetrical facades, bay windows, conical towers and steeply pitched, irregularly-shaped roofs. Embellishment in an array of materials, including stone and brick on lower walls with clapboarding and shingles above, was common, as was decorative spindlework. The Gustav Hottinger House (1054 W. Oakdale Ave.) displays the asymmetrical proportions and picturesque rooflines typical of the Queen Anne style.

### ***Classical Revival***

The World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, popularized the Classical Revival, a style based on Ancient Greek and Roman architecture and the buildings of later, Classical-influenced periods such as the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo. The Classical Revival style emphasized symmetrical facades through a minimal use of bays, towers and other building elements and instead focused on Classical ornament, including columns, cornices and triangular pediments. Buildings of the Classical Revival style were clad in a variety of materials, including brick, stone, terra cotta and wood. The Gustav Hottinger three-flat (1059 W. Oakdale Ave.) is a fine example of the Classical Revival style and features fluted Ionic columns, a Classical entablature and a modillioned cornice.

### ***Viennese Modern***

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, art and architecture across Europe turned to a distinctly new style – modernism. Although each responded to its unique doctrine, heritage and location, they shared an interest in authenticity, or aligning construction and aesthetics with modern technology and needs. Popular during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Viennese Modern architecture rejected Art Nouveau's lavish undulations in favor of a synthesis of various architectural principles. Articulated with the advantage of modern engineering, it combined Arts and Crafts ideals of simplicity and integrity with Classicism's foundation in symmetry and clarity of proportion. This generally resulted in geometric forms and a prioritization of structural interest over applied ornament. Unusual for Chicago, the Arnold Hottinger House (1057 W. Oakdale Ave.) reflects the values of the Viennese Modern style with austere rectilinear terra cotta ornamentation located in its large spandrel panel and cornice.

## **TERRA COTTA AND CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE**

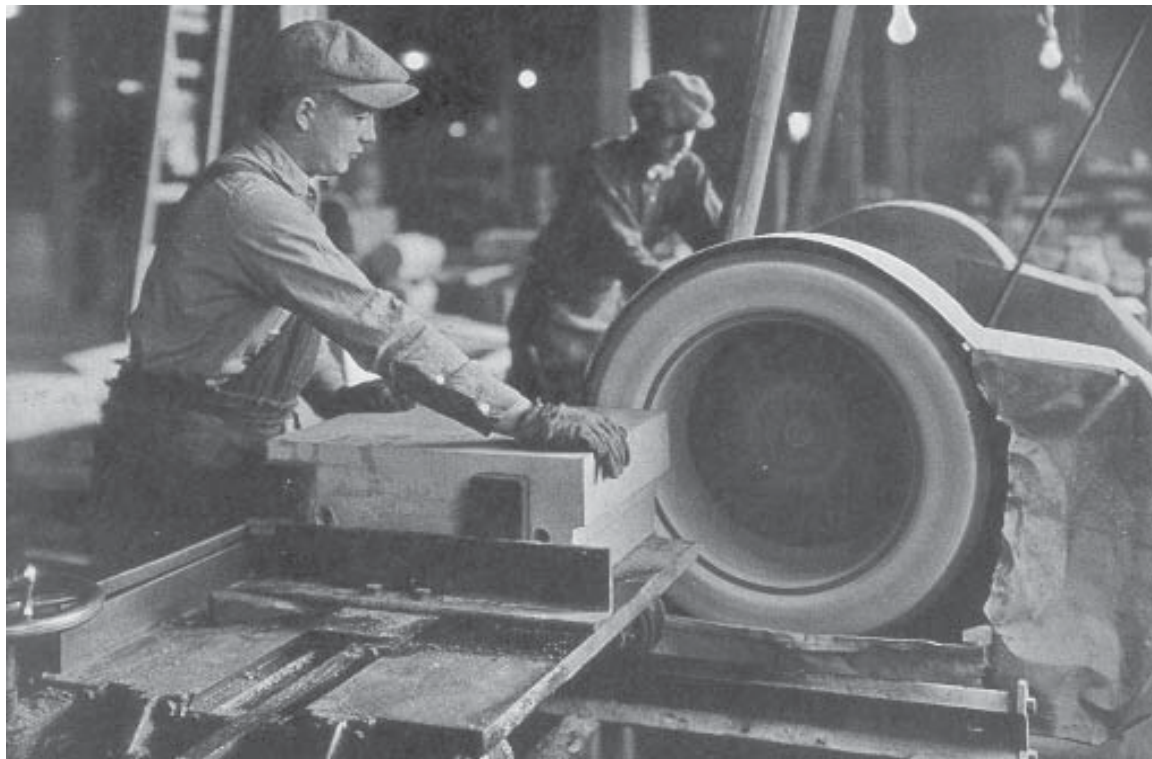
Based in the seat of architectural and technological innovation at the turn of the century, the terra cotta industry thrived in Chicago. Terra cotta factories took advantage of both Chicago's central position in a vast transportation network and nearby clay deposits in Indiana.

Developed first to fashion clay urns and statuary, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company – the first terra cotta company in the United States – opened in 1868 and soon expanded into architectural terra cotta production. As a practicing architect and with experience in John M. Van Osdel's office, Chicago Terra Cotta Company secretary Sanford E. Loring hired Italian clay modeler Giovanni Meli to execute European-style terra cotta. However, poor quality terra cotta plagued the factory until James Taylor, then superintendent of England's largest terra cotta works, came to the company in 1870. Taylor increased the quality of architectural terra cotta by utilizing a new kiln and better preparation of the clay body.

Spared by the Great Fire of 1871, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company successfully met the resulting building boom's demands. Finding that traditional building materials failed in the fire – iron twisted, brick and granite broke and crumbled – architects sought a new layer of protection and found the answer in terra cotta. Terra cotta provided a fire-proof barrier to less stable materials and was used both between and around cast iron I-beams and columns, for floor beams, partitions and backing up exterior walls. In addition, there was a high demand for terra-cotta cornices, which had important cost and weight advantages over the more customary galvanized iron and stone cornices.

Although John R. True, Gustav Hottinger and John Brunkhorst left the Chicago Terra Cotta Company to rival its business with their own factory, True, Brunkhorst & Company in 1877, they quickly became its successor when the Chicago Terra Cotta Company went

**Right: Workmen in the fitting room at the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company hand-number pieces of terra cotta to indicate their eventual placement on a building. Bottom: Grinding the edges of terra cotta blocks to ensure a perfect fit at Northwestern Terra Cotta.**





out of business in 1879. Renamed the Northwestern Terra Cotta Works, it took over the Chicago Terra Cotta Company's orders and extensive factory. After 1883, Northwestern operated out of a huge plant at Clybourn and Wrightwood Avenues, and shipped its architectural terra cotta across the nation. By 1900, it had become the nation's largest terra cotta producer, employing 750 workmen in a plant covering twenty-four acres.

The use of terra cotta grew with Chicago's expansion, especially after the city passed an ordinance in 1886 requiring all buildings over ninety feet to be absolutely fireproof. In addition, terra cotta lent itself to the construction of the emerging "Chicago School" of architecture, a movement that produced the world's first tall buildings with the development of steel frame construction. The city's building boom of the 1880s and 1890s boosted terra cotta's use as exterior cladding material because of its lightness, durability and potential for decorative uses. Terra cotta's plasticity allowed a higher degree of detail, which it retained longer than traditional building materials. The Northwestern Terra Cotta Company produced the terra cotta sheathing for many downtown buildings, including the Rookery (Burnham & Root, 1885); the Chicago Stock Exchange, (Adler & Sullivan, 1894); and the Reliance (D.H. Burnham & Co., 1890, 1895). Continued demand for stock ornamental pieces kept the company especially busy.

The turn of the century saw an expansion of terra cotta producers in both Chicago and the nation. Desiring to thwart inferior quality and price-cutting, the National Terra Cotta Society was organized in 1911 to maintain work standards and provide advertising. Although technological advancements of the 1920s brought improvements in production, including gas-fired tunnel kilns and glaze 'guns,' the industry remained based in labor-intensive hand modeling, pressing and finishing. However, by retaining skillful European clay modelers and maintaining high quality standards, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company was able to secure the most prestigious contracts in the city during this period, including the Carbide and Carbon Building (Burnham Brothers, Inc., 1929), the Wrigley Building (Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, 1923) and the Chicago Theater (Rapp and Rapp, 1921). At the forefront of architectural trends, Northwestern Terra Cotta Company quickly brought six French sculptors to Chicago to create Art Deco motifs after the 1925 Paris Exposition.

Like other handcraft industries, the crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression sent the terra cotta industry into financial hardship. With contracts left unpaid and construction in Chicago altogether stopped by 1932, terra cotta manufacturers soon went out of business, including the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company. However, when the Works Progress Administration began the construction of public buildings, they specified terra cotta and the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company reopened to fill the orders. The smooth terra cotta wall ashlar dictated by economic conditions during the depression continued after World War II with the influence of the International Style and its lack of ornament. Not cost-effective as a building material, the industry further suffered as terra cotta began to crack, crumble and rust with age. The Northwestern Terra Cotta Company was forced to close in 1956 and the remaining terra cotta businesses shut down by the mid-1960s.



The Northwestern Terra Cotta Company produced the terra cotta sheathing for many of downtown Chicago's famous buildings, including the Carbon and Carbide Building (top left); the Chicago Theater (top right); and the Reliance Building (bottom).

## **TERRA COTTA AND GERMAN CULTURE IN LAKEVIEW**

The four Oakdale Avenue residences in the Terra Cotta Row District are a touchstone to the German origins of Lakeview. The character of their architectural details mirrors the ethnic origins of their owners, as well as much of the surrounding community. Because most of Northwestern Terra Cotta's employees were German, ethnic and community ties were pervasive elements of the company and its operations.

From its beginnings as an independent township in 1857 (it was annexed to Chicago in 1889), Lakeview was a bastion for German-Americans. Although its early economy was based on truck-farming, by the 1870s and '80s industry and commercial development were strong in the community. One of the major manufacturing interests was the Deering Harvester works on Fullerton Avenue near Western Avenue. It covered more than 25 acres and employed 1,500 men manufacturing farm machinery. Breweries and brickyards were other large employers. Many residents worked in the building trades, as masons and carpenters.

Given the brick-making and masonry experience of many Lakeview residents, the establishment of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company in the town was appropriate. Between 1869 and 1966, Chicago was the location of four of the terra cotta industry's most important companies, including Chicago Terra Cotta (1868-1879), American (1881-1966), Midland (1910-c.1939), and Northwestern (1877-1960). Their products are still seen on innumerable buildings that were built from the mid-1880s to the 1930s throughout Chicago and the Midwest.

Through its innovations and high aesthetic standard, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company distinguished itself from even this elite group of local manufacturers. The company was essentially the descendant of the Chicago Terra Cotta Company, having been founded in 1877 by several of its employees, including John R. True, Gustav Hottinger, John Brunkhorst, and Henry Rohkam. (Initially formed as True, Brunkhorst & Company, and re-named True, Hottinger & Company in 1886, the company formally adopted the Northwestern title in 1888). Their first factory was a two-story structure that formerly stood at Lincoln Avenue and Wells Street.

Like other terra cotta fabricators of the day, the company sustained itself as much by orders for lawn ornaments, garden statuary, and similar "horticultural" ornaments, as it did by purchases of architectural pieces. Terra cotta competed with galvanized iron for use as decorative cornices and window and door hoods. Because architectural uses for the material were new and un-tried, the early companies found it difficult to convince architects of the desirable qualities of terra cotta. As one terra cotta executive recalled, "In those days it was necessary to convert the architect and hypnotize the owner in order to get a contract." Companies bolstered their sales by developing stock patterns for use on buildings.



The Northwestern Terra Cotta Company moved its factory to Clybourn and Wrightwood Avenues in Lakeview in 1883. The company had out-grown two previous locations, and the selection of a site in the then-outlying suburb provided them with enough land for future growth. As its reputation grew, along with the number of orders, the company built a huge complex of more than a dozen buildings on the east side of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway embankment between Wrightwood and Diversey Avenues. The administration and main plant building were located on an appropriately named street, Terra Cotta Place, a block-long thoroughfare located a half-block south of Wrightwood Avenue, between Clybourn Avenue and Altgeld Street. In the garrulous rhetoric of their day, the authors of the book *Industrial Chicago* extolled the ethnic traits leading to the company's success:

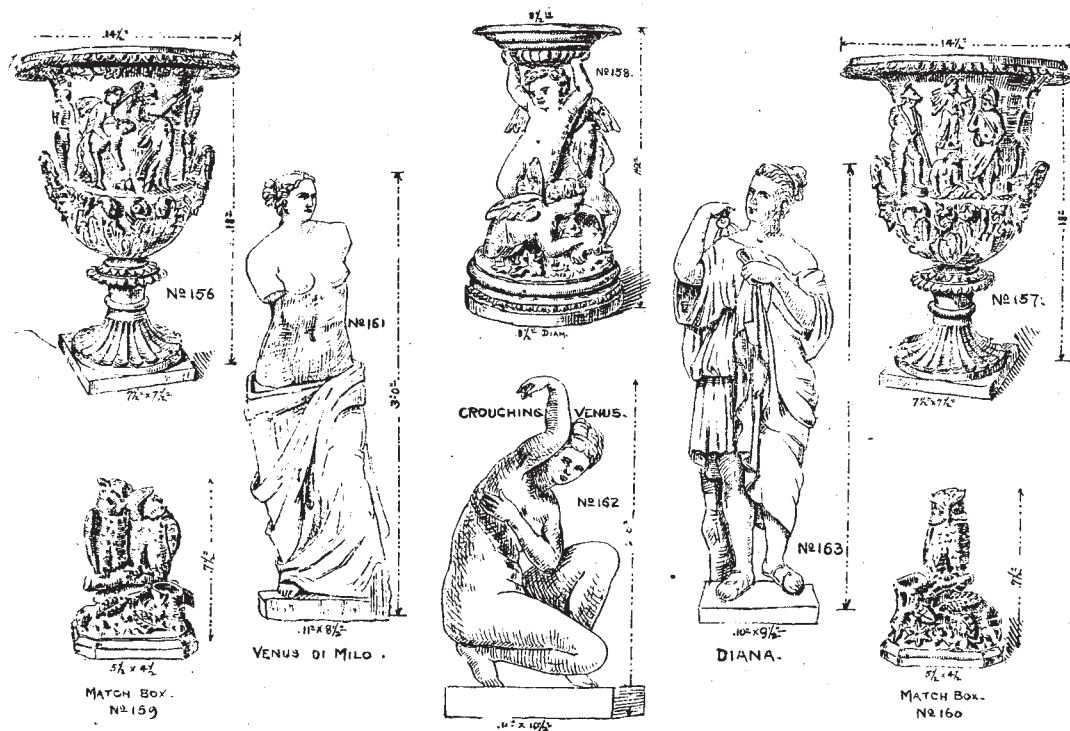
...to those Germans the early success attending terra cotta works in the city must be credited. Privations and disappointments waited on their beginnings, but with that humility and economy characteristic of their race they labored on and won.

By the time Hottinger and Rohkam purchased their residential parcels on Oakdale Avenue in the mid-1880s, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company was one of the largest manufacturers in the nation. Providing terra cotta for most of the important commercial buildings in Chicago, the company was building a national reputation.

During its peak years, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company employed more than 800 people, including many German-American residents of Lakeview. The community's strong German population was probably another factor in Northwestern's move to Lakeview. Three of its founders — Hottinger, Rohkam, and John Brunkhorst — had emigrated from Germany and Austria and settled in the Lakeview community. Aside from the four residences in the Terra Cotta Row District, John True's house is the most interesting. Built in 1887 and still standing (though altered) at 1117 W. Wrightwood Ave., it is smaller than Hottinger and Rohkam's houses but has similarly ornate terra cotta work. Adolph Hottinger, Gustav's son and a chemist for Northwestern and who pioneered many of its popular glazes, lived in an unassuming frame house at 1108 W. Oakdale Ave. (1896), less than a block west of the Terra Cotta Row District. Only the house's terra cotta block foundation suggests any connection with the manufacturer.

The ethnic associations of the owners and architects and of the larger community are reflected in the Germanic detailing of the Oakdale Avenue houses. Many German-Americans in Lakeview had first-hand knowledge of architecture in Germany, and re-ferred to it in their work. The distinctive German/Austrian character of these houses directly conveys the ethnic origins of many of Lakeview's early residents.

Furthermore, the richness of architectural detailing of the Terra Cotta Row District makes the ensemble distinct in the city. The degree of detailing was only made possible by the plasticity of terra cotta, which allowed the material to be easily molded into elaborate



Top: By the 1920s, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company was the largest manufacturer of the material in the world. Its plant covered more than 24 acres between Wrightwood and Diversey Avenues just east of Clybourn Avenue. Bottom: In addition to their architectural products, the company also made terra cotta garden objects, such as the ones illustrated from their 1880 catalog.

ornamental forms. By the time the last of the district's four buildings was built in 1916, terra cotta was being used for details of buildings on virtually every block in the city. Few individual, and certainly no grouping, of residences demonstrate the bravura in terra cotta seen on this block of Oakdale Avenue.

## **CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Terra Cotta Row District be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- C The history of Terra Cotta Row District highlights the influential role of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, the first terra cotta company in Chicago.
- C The Terra Cotta Row District exemplifies the unique importance and popularity of terra cotta in Chicago, beginning with its usage after the Great Fire of 1871 and continuing in the subsequent decades.
- C The four buildings and the decorative wall in the Terra Cotta Row District were built by Gustav Hottinger and Henry Rohkam, two of the founders of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company, for a time the nation's largest manufacturer of terra cotta.
- C The Terra Cotta Row District is noteworthy in its association with German-American culture in the Lakeview community. From its beginnings as an independent township in 1857, and continuing well after annexation into Chicago in 1889, Lakeview was a bastion for German-Americans.

### ***Criterion 4: Important Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- C The Terra Cotta Row District is a fine group of buildings utilizing distinctive terra cotta for their ornamentation and for two unique decorative walls.



- C The Terra Cotta Row District is distinctive for the quantity and variety of terra cotta decoration employed. The material is used for many decorative elements including spandrels, chimney pots, moldings, plaques, window frames, and other details.
- C The architectural styles represented in the district include the Queen Anne and Classical Revival styles, and the Flemish Renaissance Revival and Viennese Modern styles, the latter two unusual for the City.
- C The buildings within the Terra Cotta Row District display exceptionally fine craftsmanship and details in face and molded brick and terra cotta.
- C The district also includes a distinctive terra cotta wall which is unlike any other in the City and may be the one of the last surviving examples such a wall in the City.

***Criterion 6: Distinctive Theme as a District***

*Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other theme expressed through distinctive areas, districts, places, buildings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.*

- C The four buildings and terra cotta wall within the Terra Cotta Row District display a distinct visual unity based largely on a concentration of decorative terra cotta that distinguishes the area from any other in the City.
- C The Terra Cotta Row District is among Chicago's most picturesque streetscapes due to the overall quality and high level of design, craftsmanship, and integrity displayed by the buildings, especially in brick and terra cotta.

***Integrity Criterion***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.*

The buildings in the Terra Cotta Row District possess, in general, fine physical integrity, displaying through their siting, scale and overall design their historic relationship to the surrounding Lakeview neighborhood. They retain their historic exterior forms and most historic materials and detailing, including distinctive terra cotta ornamentation.

The building within the district that has had the most alterations is the Gustav Hottinger House at 1054 W. Oakdale Ave. Changes to the building include the filling in of attic windows on the south- and east-facing gables and a section of the second floor above the front entrance, and an addition at the building's rear northeast corner. In addition, the house's coachhouse has had alterations to its details, and the house's original terra cotta

wall has been removed. However, the house's overall historic form and the majority of its historic fabric remain, as does its historic relationship to the other buildings within the district.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the Terra Cotta Row District, the Commission recommends that the significant features include:

- all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the four principal structures and three associated coachhouses of the district visible from the public rights-of-way;
- the terra cotta wall in front of 1040, 1042, and 1048 W. Oakdale Ave. and in front of 1059 W. Oakdale Ave.; and
- C the decorative urn in the side (east) yard of 1048 W. Oakdale Ave.

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- Woltersdorf, Arthur S. "Patrician Houses of Old North Germany." *Western Architect* 36 (March, 1927).

## **ADDRESS RANGES**

All buildings located in the Terra Cotta Row District have address ranges on either Oakdale or Seminary Avenues:

- C 1040-1058 W. Oakdale Ave. (evens)
- C 1055-1059 W. Oakdale Ave. (odds)
- C 2915-2945 N. Seminary Ave. (odds)

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **CITY OF CHICAGO**

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*Chicago Ceramics & Glass: An Illustrated History from 1871 to 1933*: p. 18.

Timothy Samuelson: p. 23.

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-2958) TTY; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, <http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>.*

*This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the City Council's final Landmark Designation ordinance should be regarded as final.*



## **COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

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John W. Baird, Secretary  
Denise M. Casalino, P.E.  
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